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mony, but in actual practice this often takes place as early as her seventh or eighth year. Since this is a feast occasion involving considerable expense to her family, there is a tendency to hold a single ceremony, at which perhaps a pubescent girl, together with her younger sisters or cousins, will all have their ears bored. On the same occasion male children of approximately the same age may be initiated into the Buddhist monkhood.[5]

The girl initiate is dressed for the occasion in the traditional garb of the Burmese court, and in addition she wears a spired-helmet type of head dress. The villagers gather at her family's house for the event. An elderly woman rubs an anaesthetic plant substance on the girl's ear lobes and pierces them with gold pins. The pins are left in the ears, bent back. Later, if larger holes are desired, rolled leaves may be inserted. The family presents gifts to the assembled guests; often these are conventionalized tokens, such as inscribed cigars and fans.

Courtship and Marriage. Young people in the villages find ample opportunities to assess each other's manners, physical appearance, and personality in the company of others, at feasts and various gatherings. If a young man and woman are together apart from the company of others it is assumed that sex relations are involved. In fact, such going together is spoken of as "getting married." The Burmese find it hard to conceive of a young unmarried couple associating on a purely friendly, non-sexual basis: such behavior would be regarded as contrary to nature. However, unchaperoned association is disapproved and does not occur very frequently.

Once a pair have decided they wish to marry, the boy will inform his parents of his desire. They will already know, especially in the smaller villages, of the standing of the girl's family and of her dowry potentialities; in fact, as soon as they have sensed their son's interest in a particular girl they will take steps to acquire this information. They will also ascertain whether acceptance by the girl's family is likely. In a small community the approach may be made directly by the boy's parents. In larger centers a female go-between is more likely to be employed. The boy's parents will be informed by the girl's family that the decision must await the outcome of consultation with an astrologer concerning the compatibility of the birth dates of the prospective bride and groom. If the marriage is found to be an auspicious one—which it will usually be found to be if the girl's parents desire the match—an affirmative answer will be relayed to the boy's parents. The latter will then call upon her parents and in the presence of elders, not necessarily related to either family, formally ask for the girl's hand.

5 Description of the boy's initiation ceremony is being reserved for a separate publication.